

Re: Media inquiry regarding ambulance bypass

McCann, Megan <[REDACTED]>

Fri 10/11/2019 11:07 AM

To: Diedrich, John <John.Diedrich@jrn.com>

John,

Below is Northwestern Memorial's response to your inquiry. Thanks for the opportunity to respond.

Have a nice weekend,
Megan

In recent years, Northwestern Memorial Hospital has experienced an increase in patient volume which has put us in a position to consistently operate at or near patient capacity. On rare occasions, when a hospital is completely full and all patient beds are occupied, it is necessary to redistribute ambulances to other hospitals that have capacity by going on ambulance diversion for brief periods of time. Our hospital is continuously exploring ways to improve and expand capacity and decrease time on diversion.

When on diversion, our ambulance arrivals decrease by nearly half. However, even when on ambulance diversion, our emergency department is always open to receive patients – both those who arrive directly and those patients who paramedics recognize as needing our specialized services for trauma, stroke, heart attacks and other critical issues.

We strongly support and adhere to the City of Chicago's policy for ambulance diversion, which provides a framework for hospitals and paramedics to work together to redistribute patients safely and optimally to assure individuals receive care in a time efficient manner. Per this policy, additional ambulance transportation time can be no longer than 5 minutes.

Some important points to remember are:

- Northwestern Memorial is always open to receive patients. We never divert patients who arrive directly at the emergency department. Our emergency department is an open resource for the community, accepting all people, 24 hours per day, regardless of ability to pay. Diversion does not affect this; it is an alert to ambulances to redistribute patients safely and optimally when another hospital that can provide the appropriate level of care is nearby.
- As a Level 1 trauma center and tertiary care center, Northwestern Memorial does not divert ambulances with critically ill patients who the paramedics recognize are having major traumas such as strokes, heart attacks or other issues that require our complex capabilities.
- The decision to go on ambulance diversion is never an economic decision; it is a strategy used to assure patients in need are getting time appropriate care at a neighboring hospital rather than waiting to receive care.
- Our emergency department has experienced an increase in patients with complex needs, including those with mental health concerns, homeless populations and older adults. Caring for these socially and medically complex patient populations impacts capacity. We are actively working to expand capacity and add resources to specifically address their unique needs, including becoming the first accredited Level 1 Geriatric Emergency Department in Illinois.

- Northwestern Memorial has gone to great lengths to add and expand within regulatory limits. In order to add beds or further expand capacity, state approval would be required.

From: Diedrich, John <John.Diedrich@jrn.com>
Sent: Thursday, October 10, 2019 1:56 PM
To: McCann, Megan <[REDACTED]>
Subject: Re: Media inquiry regarding ambulance bypass

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Thank you

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From: Diedrich, John [mailto:John.Diedrich@jrn.com]
Sent: Wednesday, October 09, 2019 11:22 AM
To: McCann, Megan <[REDACTED]>
Cc: Crowe, Kevin <kcrowe@usatoday.com>
Subject: Re: Media inquiry regarding ambulance bypass

WARNING: External email, please be mindful before clicking or replying.

Great. Thanks

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